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HOWARD SNYDER — SOUTHERN FARM

WALLACE FOWLIE — FRENCH LITERARY SCENE

olume LVI, number 8, 1952

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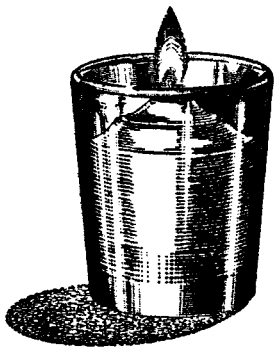

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THIS WEEK

Week by Week 187

Britain and European Union
by P. C. Gordon Walker 191

Southern Farm
by Howard Snyder 193

Education by Reflex Action
by Francis Downing 195

The Stage
by Walter Kerr 196

The Screen
by Philip T. Hartung 197

Communications 198

The French Literary Scene
by Wallace Fowlie 201

Books 203

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THE
Commonweal
week by week

BARRICADING THE DOOR

ALTHOUGH there is little in the legislative record of Senator McCarran of Nevada to inspire such confidence, we did have some small hope for his new immigration bill. One should, after all, be able to expect from national legislation a certain measure of vision, a reasonable minimum of statesmanship. But Senator McCarran's work is now finished. If it becomes law, we will once more be shamed before the world.

In few areas has the contrast between the American creed and day-to-day practice been more obvious than in our legislation on immigration. Conceived in ignorance and perpetuating the most discredited racist beliefs, our immigration laws not only sharply restrict the total number of immigrants to be admitted to the U. S. but also clearly discriminate against particular nationalities.

The basic immigration policy under which we operate dates back to shortly after World War I. It was established some years after the period when, for the first time, large numbers of would-be citizens from southern and eastern Europe began to reach the U. S. City-dwellers, largely unskilled and uneducated, the new immigrants congregated in the tenement areas of America's large cities, enduring most of the ills that poverty, over-crowding, ignorance and exploitation can bring.

Today the children and grandchildren of these immigrants hold honored places in American life. For many of them the tenements are now far behind. But post-World War I legislators did not wait to see if the American dream would survive the testing of the slums. They associated poverty and disease with the nations from which the new immigrants came, and they proceeded to write the prejudices of the period into the law of the land. As a result, our immigration laws stand as a monument to the only real crime of which the new immigrants were guilty —that of not being Anglo-Saxon.

The framers of our immigration legislation set a figure of around one hundred and fifty thousand as the top limit for entry into the country in any one year. But even that far-from-generous total existed only on paper. The basis for the quotas to be assigned to each country was carefully chosen so that immigration from southern and eastern Europe could be severely limited. National quotas were not transferable, and for many years considerably less than half of the potential number of immigrants actually entered the country. Quotas from countries like England have been largely unused, while countries like Italy with small quotas have waiting lists extending well into the next century.

DEFENDERS of present immigration restrictions delight in setting up straw men and then destroying them. Therefore it should be made clear that no one thinks the U. S. can admit all the people who would like to come here. No one is backing any proposal to flood the country with immigrants beyond our ability to absorb them. But the U. S. does need immigration laws which do not so obviously give the lie to our own national history and ideals. That minimum we were hoping to find in Senator McCarran's new bill. In that hope we were disappointed.

It would be incorrect to say that the legislation introduced by Senator McCarran represents no improvement on existing immigration practices. Almost any attempt to codify and revise existing regulations was likely to mean some improvement, and Senator McCarran's proposal does contain a few advances. The measure takes a very small step, for example, away from the blanket-type restrictions on Asiatics which have for so long seriously hurt America's cause in that region. But most of the major flaws in existing legislation are retained, and there are even a few new objectionable features.

Stung into action by the provisions of the McCarran proposal, Senators Humphrey and Lehman and Representative Roosevelt have introduced a rival measure. Co-sponsors of their legislation include such distinguished Senators as Benton, Douglas, McMahon, Kefauver and Morse. The bill they have written stands head-and-shoulders over McCarran's

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proposals. It would, for example, use 1950 census figures rather than those of 1920, so that nations of eastern and southern Europe would receive more than nominal quotas. It would allow unused quotas to be transferred, so that Italy, say, could fill the unused portion of England's annual quota.

The Humphrey-Lehman-Roosevelt proposal, in short, appears sensible and humane, rather than petty and mean-minded. It deserves the full hearing that Senator McCarran is now trying to deny it. This new measure might go a long way toward erasing the national dishonor of existing immigration laws. That is more than Senator McCarran's proposals will do.

OIL'S ROLE IN THE CAMPAIGN

THE fight for title to our substantial off-shore oil resources has been long and bitter. As things stand now ownership is vested in our federal government. But individual states—principally California, Louisiana and Texas—have been after title hot and heavy the past few years. Mr. Truman vetoed the last attempt of Congress to hand it over, and the Supreme Court upheld national ownership in 1947 and 1950.

Now the interested states have returned to the charge. The stake is huge; Mr. Truman places it as high as forty billion dollars. Another estimate places the potential yield at a quarter million barrels a day. Advocates of the bill that has just passed both Houses seem to place their chief argumentative emphasis on the states' alleged prior claim to ownership. Also, as so often happens when private interests have an object in view, they plead in the name of "states' rights." They do not fail to capitalize on fears that power has become too highly centralized in Washington.

Mr. Truman's side permits of even more dramatic arguments. It is hardly a secret that the states in question want title to the oil so that they may make over leases to certain major oil companies. Hence the charge that such legislation seeks to rob the American people of their patrimony to enrich a few. The oil industry has an unsavory past; it is not too difficult even today to cast the oil companies as villains.

The last time the argument was at its height national defense came into the picture. That provides another note for the argument—one that is more debatable, however. Would the Navy or any other arm of the federal government actually do any more to develop the coveted undersea oil resources than the big oil companies? And in the event of another war would not the companies be more than willing to sell to the armed forces?

With Louisiana, Texas and Florida (to a lesser extent) vitally interested, the oil issue can have a real bearing on the elections. The South, with its 1948 defections, is still a question mark for the Democrats. Mr. Truman's determined stand will hardly ingratiate him with local sentiment at this critical juncture.

General Eisenhower has already indicated that he would favor vesting ownership of these coastal underwater oil lands in the several states. If, then, Mr. Truman's veto again quashes the states' try for possession, we may be sure that his opponents on the issue will simply bide their time. A Republican victory in November would make the transfer dead certain.

On this basis, and on the assumption that the Senate will again sustain the Truman veto, the oil debate forges to the front as a prominent campaign issue. It is the sort of thing to give the marginal or independent voter pause. Because of bipartisanship, foreign policy may well not be an issue this time. There are in addition all the impulsions stemming from the past year's political revelations and the general feeling that the country would benefit from a change. The oil controversy indicates, however, that such voters will have to balance all this against the fate of a number of big domestic issues.

NEXT WEEK

JEANNE RIHA writes about the present scene on the island of Formosa.

"Formosa is one of the most attractive fortresses the world has seen. The vapor of hot springs steam-bathes its mountain tops. Its foliage is streaked with showy flowers, and mountain goats wander casually on the hillsides. Bananas piled deep and yellow on every wayside fruit cart sell for as little as fourteen American cents a dozen. But no resident of Formosa—Chinese, native Formosan or visiting American—is allowed to forget that the small island is a fortress. Tourists are discouraged; frequent festivals and firecrackers are frowned upon."

THE RICH GET RICHER AND . . .

SINCE Marshall Plan aid produced tangible results in Europe almost from the start, it is natural to expect the same from the beginnings of the Point

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Four program. It is disquieting to find otherwise. The burden of current UNESCO reports on "backward" areas is very adverse. The free underdeveloped peoples continue to lose ground; today they have fallen further than ever behind their western counterparts.

On the other hand similar areas which the Communists have taken over have registered certain strides. Production and standards of living are moving forward. To be sure, this is a result of totalitarian discipline, of brutal methods of getting things done. It none the less serves as a challenge to the West, for where people struggle on the bitter margin of existence man's livelihood takes priority in his mind.

Why is it that the free industrialized nations of the West can outproduce the highly disciplined slave regimes of the Soviets when the latter have had the greater success with their underdeveloped satellites? (Surely that has something to do with the current prediction that in a big showdown the millions of the African world would be neutral if not hostile to the West.)

If the habits of centuries are to be changed and the languors induced by heat and dampness are to be overcome without resorting to a new and more iron colonialism, Western technical and financial aid will have to be administered in these areas on a much larger scale. To surpass the lash and enable these peoples to attain a decent level of existence Point Four will have, for one thing, to develop considerably larger proportions in operations and personnel.

WE CAN'T ELECT UTOPIA

WE have a two-party system. That means that when one group is "in," its rivals are "out." It means that while the "in" group has the major responsibility for governing the nation its opponents are almost professionally committed to finding fault, criticizing, lamenting the immediate past and periodically despairing for a future resting in the hands which so precariously hold the present.

The role of the loyal opposition in American political life is, by the nature of things, largely negative. The ruling party has the ball, and ambitious political "outs" must necessarily devote much of their efforts to getting it away from them. Kept within reasonable bounds all this is as it should be.

But around the time of national elections the steady stream of criticism is speeded up, negations gain momentum. All kinds of dire predictions are made and the incumbent party's yesterdays are mercilessly exhumed. The air grows thick with charges and denials. Sometimes, in the optimistic glow of a campaign, a future full of promise is predicted, if only people will use their votes wisely and throw the rascals out.

This is American politics according to Hoyle. In the heat and partisan passion of a major election no one really expects much creative thought or consistency from the impatient "outs." For the moment they see their main job as a matter of getting themselves and their ideas "in," and the only way to do that is to destroy the opposition. When Senator Taft advocates a smaller military budget and then in the same breath calls for a greater military effort, accusing the Administration of being "soft" on Communism, it is good to remember that the Senator wants very much to be President of the United States. Whatever one thinks of the man who at one time or another has been for and against every major move the U. S. has made in Europe and the Orient, it is useful to recall that President Taft would have to face up to the realities which Candidate Taft can coolly ignore. When General MacArthur (who must now be reckoned as a powerful political campaigner however often, in political speeches, he denies any political ambition) warns against the dangers of putting a military man in the White House, one does not necessarily conclude that the General has undergone a change of heart since the days of 1948 when he was a military candidate himself.

The excesses of campaign oratory could become a serious matter. If Americans began to believe, in the heady atmosphere of wholesale denunciation and negation, that there really was some magic way to return to the days when we were not faced with the challenge of an ambitious worldwide conspiracy and could concentrate all efforts on defending ourselves and expanding our own prosperity, we could be dangerously distracted from our real tasks. It would be dangerous if campaign oratory were to lead people to believe that somehow by casting the right vote they could relax and worry no longer about threats to our security and threats to human liberty the world over. It would be dangerous if it led voters to believe that a new Administration would not be faced with the same old problems and run the same risks that face free peoples everywhere. It would be dangerous if it encouraged Americans to believe that they would no longer be called upon to make sacrifices of money and goods and even of military effort, where the challenge arises, because somehow the need for these unpleasant things would be miraculously dispelled. It would be dangerous if it gave the people the idea that the violent history of the last twenty years was merely a product of the Democratic Administration's bungling and with the Democrats out of the way we could finally all relax

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and enjoy the nineteenth century with Mr. Taft and the General who was going to fade away.

All this would be dangerous because it would play right into the hands of world Communism. If ever we get to the point where we are no longer willing or able to face up to the harsh realities of the twentieth century, we are paving our own way to the enslaved realities of the twenty-first.

"Me-tooism" is, understandably, a hated political concept, but there is a sense in which it is the only honest, only realistic evaluation a candidate can make. No matter which party is in office, it will have to face up to the same bewildering political problems and call upon the citizens of this country to bear the same heavy burdens. No matter who occupies the White House, there is no escaping the present. Ambitious politicos should not imply that there is. The road ahead is strewn with dangers, known and unknown, no matter who leads the way. It would be cruel to give an already harassed people hopes which the course of modern history fails to justify. No matter which way the country goes, Republican or Democrat, the twentieth century will still be with us.

MORALITY BY FIAT

THE average American's faith in the efficacy of action is famous, but by now we are all aware of some of its shortcomings. It has been pointed out over and over again how the tendency to view all problems as soluble through direct assault can trap us into naivete and oversimplification. Especially in the realm of human behavior, too direct and narrowly moralistic an approach may lead to worse problems than we set out to solve.

It is certainly frustrating and deplorable, for example, that a great amount of popular entertainment is currently taken up with the violent and sensational. It is equally disturbing that more Americans are not concerned with self-improvement through serious uses of radio and television. But these are problems which are part of the whole context of our culture, and no direct answer to them exists. We cannot improve the national taste through legislation.

These observations are occasioned by some recent happenings in Congress. Certain legislators are disturbed over the possible "corrupting influence" of radio, television, and current literature on the nation's morals, and so, in keeping with the investigation-happy mood of Congress, they have voted to set up two committees to investigate and offer recommendations on these problems. One group will examine the effects of radio and television programs on juvenile delinquency, loose morals, and crime; another group will seek to determine what current literature may tend to the lowering of morals and resultant deterioration of American behavior.

In the debate which preceded the organization of the committees, the legislators pointed out the frequency of murders, kidnapping, thefts, and blackmail in radio and television shows. And one Congressman reported that on television he had seen beautiful ladies demonstrating the techniques of pouring cocktails. So—let there be an investigation.

The difficulty is not that the legislators are concerned over unreal problems. They are all too real. But a typically legislative approach to them is at best naive and at worst dangerous.

We may be treated, for example, to the spectacle of a legislative denunciation of sin. We may be assured that Congress is against murder, theft, kidnapping—and possibly beautiful women pouring cocktails.

Or, if the investigators really take themselves seriously, we may have recommendations made for some federal code of "decency" and "good taste" in radio, television and literature. In some legislative minds there may lurk the possibility of establishing a federal censorship of these media in order to eliminate "corrupting influences." This possibility is dismaying, to say the least. Whatever incidental good it might accomplish toward removing the causes of "the deterioration of American behavior" (and the results which might be hoped for here are debatable and vague), such a move would constitute a great threat to legitimate freedom in this country.

The dangers that some Congressmen might demand the banning of T. S. Eliot's most recent drama from TV presentation because it tended to encourage gin-drinking, and others might press for the suppression of William Faulkner's novels because they deal with violence, are not wildly impossible results. The censor is not historically famous for his sense of humor or his sense of proportion. Most censorship, especially at a high and impersonal level, tends to be arbitrary, indiscriminate and anti-human.

We don't know of any easy answer to the problems raised by low-level entertainment. We do think that attempts to seek such answers through the average congressional investigation and a possible federal censorship are both futile and dangerous. The real problem will be solved only through the slow and never complete maturing of popular spiritual and cultural values. These, unfortunately, are the very things which are threatened by the vague and indiscriminate moves toward censorship upon which Congress has now embarked.

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Britain and European Union

THE BRITISH SEE THEIR ROLE IN CREATING UNION AS THAT OF A LINK BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES, THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE CONTINENT

P. C. GORDON WALKER

TO judge by the Council of Europe at Strasbourg, England is unpopular at the moment on the Continent. I went to the last session as the leader of the Labor Party section of our delegation. We were assailed on all sides for being against European union and for failing to give a lead. We were taxed with resisting not only European but also American desires for a federation of Europe. We were told that other Commonwealth countries were much more in favor of European federation than we pretended. Once or twice I had to defend our position in words that were perhaps a little rough—but when you are under constant attack and think you are right, you sometimes get stung into rather frank speech. I do not think the Englishman is ferocious or really *méchant*: but like the tiger, *quand on l'attaque il se défend.*

I do not know how widespread on the Continent are the views expressed at Strasbourg and the idea that America also wants us to become a part of a federal Europe: I sometimes suspect that the keenest advocates of federal union at Strasbourg are not quite as well in touch with public opinion in their own countries as they would have us think. But there is no smoke without fire, and, certainly, there is plenty of smoke at Strasbourg.

Much of the attack upon England about our attitude to European federation seems to me to be based on a very grave misconception of the realities. And the greatest reality of all is the importance of America and its impact upon Europe. It is continuously dinned into our English ears that there can be no European federation without Britain. The real truth is that there can be no European union without America. It is not merely that America's military and economic power are of decisive importance. That is true in many parts of the world; but in Europe it leads to special and peculiar consequences.

The truth is that Europe by itself is not a coherent, viable, independent unit. Europe (of which Britain is a part) is of immense importance: it is the heart of western civilization; it commands the greatest potential resources of wealth and human skill in the world; it has, I believe, an indispensable role to play. But it is not a natural unit that can stand on its own in the world. It might conceivably do so, were there no America in the world. But America is there, and gigantic. And in consequence, in very many respects, both military and economic, Europe is part of the greater Atlantic community. European union can therefore not be divorced from Atlantic union.

This is for Britain a vital fact. Of all European powers Britain has the closest and most intimate relations with America. We are, indeed, in a threefold relationship—to Europe, to the Commonwealth, to America. We must maintain all three relationships simultaneously, as all three are necessary to our being as a power in the world. We cannot violate any one of the three vital aspects of our nature. Certainly we cannot violate our nature as a part of Europe; but we must fulfil this part of our nature in ways that are compatible with our nature as an Atlantic power and a Commonwealth power. These last two aspects of our nature combine to determine the way in which we can fulfil our nature as a European power. We cannot envisage any severance or divorce between the European and the Atlantic communities because we are a part of both.

THAT is one fundamental reason why we cannot enter as an integral part into any new organic federal state of Europe. One aspect of the impact of America's power upon Europe is that we cannot, in many important fields, enter more closely into a European organization than America is prepared to do. If we did, the Atlantic and the European communities would be drawn apart instead of together.

This fact has tended to be obscured because there are some Americans as well as some continental Europeans who are reluctant to face and accept it. Just as there are Europeans who are trying to draw us into a federal Europe, so there are Americans who are trying to push us into it. Indeed, there was a sort of coalition between these two pressures at the preliminary meeting held between American Congressmen and

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representatives of the Council of Europe before the last session at Strasbourg. This was in many ways a valuable meeting, and we all hope that more of the same kind can be held. But there were, in my view, some dangerous and misleading words spoken at this particular meeting.

The impression was given that Britain alone was standing out against a joint American-European desire for a federation of Europe. Indeed, some of the American Congressmen went so far as to suggest that, in future, strings should be attached to any aid America may give to Europe in order to force us all into a European federation.

I, for one, was very sorry that so great a European as M. Spaak encouraged the Americans to pursue such a line. A federation that was created by outside pressure of this sort would be an ill-starred thing. And it would be a grave abuse of the mutual aid upon which Atlantic defence now rests to use it for political ends of this sort. I am glad that General Eisenhower has made it quite clear that he does not share the view that Britain should be a part of any federal organization in Europe. In any case, pressure of this sort would not make Britain change its mind—because our policy arises not out of stupidity or sheer obstinacy but out of the inseparable aspects of our being as a power.

Even more disturbing was the hint, given by some of the American Congressmen at Strasbourg, that the underlying motive in pressing for a federation of Europe was to enable American military commitments in Europe to be reduced and withdrawn as soon as possible. I speak frankly because there is not enough frankness in these matters: we try to avoid misunderstandings by covering up part of the truth, with the result that the misunderstandings become much worse than they need have been. These hints by the American Congressmen are disturbing because they reveal a failure to realize that the Atlantic and the European communities must be treated as inseparable if the western world is to be strong enough, both morally and physically.

ALTHOUGH Britain cannot enter into any constitutional organization of Europe to a greater extent than America, we are fully convinced that our commitment on the Continent is a permanent one as long as the present international dangers endure. Mr. Eden, in the House of Commons, recently repeated that "we in this island are resolved to maintain armed forces on the continent of Europe for as long as is necessary." It is this sort of commitment that helps to bind together the European and Atlantic communities and lays the basis for a more effective unity of Europe.

The unreadiness shown by some of the American Congressmen to make a similar commitment works against a more effective unity of Europe by weakening the links between the European and Atlantic communities. It would, in my view, be a great mistake on the part of those on the Continent who want closer European unity—a mistake made by many of them at Strasbourg—to join forces with those Americans who do not see as far as General Eisenhower and seek to push Britain into a federal organization of Europe. It is a major consequence of the impact of American power upon Europe that there can be no real progress towards European union unless America as well as Britain accepts her full and permanent responsibilities to the two inseparable communities—the European and the Atlantic.

All this is intimately and inextricably tied up with Britain's membership in the Commonwealth. Some Europeans, I know, think we overdo this. They delude themselves with the belief that the rest of the Commonwealth is much more favorable to Britain's entering a European federation than we pretend. This is a delusion.

There is no doubt that our membership in the Commonwealth, in the same way as the fact of American power, affects our attitude to European federation. And there is not the slightest hint of a conflict between us and the other members of the Commonwealth on the matter. I can assure you that if ever we do something that any of the other members do not agree with, we hear soon enough about it.

We cannot become a subordinate part of a European federal state nor of any partial federation such as a European army, because we cannot surrender the autonomy that is necessary for us to play our part in the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth consists of equal sovereign states—and we, too, must be sovereign to be in it.

If we gave up our sovereignty and became a province in a federal Europe we would come in with far less power than as a member of the Commonwealth supported, as we are today in our European policy, by the other members of the Commonwealth. There would be the same sort of diminution of power that would result if we came in further than America and thereby weakened the organic connection that ought to exist between the Atlantic and the European communities.

Thus the impact of American power on Europe and our membership in the Commonwealth work together to determine our attitude towards European union. But I do not think these other two aspects of our nature as a power conflict with the third aspect—which is that we are a European power and a part of Europe. As such we desire European union and want to take our part in it: but the way we can do this is determined for us.

We must observe two conditions. First, the Atlantic and European communities must be linked and not severed; that means that we cannot come in to a great-

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er extent than America. Second, we must retain our sovereignty; this, partly because America will not herself surrender her sovereignty, partly because we must retain our sovereignty as a Commonwealth power. This does not mean that we cannot have European union; but it does mean that the desire for European federation is sterile and unrealistic.

IF we are to be objective, the first thing we must do is to distinguish between European union and European federation. We must get away from the quite false propaganda that is so assiduously spread that if you are against federation you are also against union.

True European union can be achieved by a great extension of inter-governmental organizations of the type of O.E.E.C. These can be extended into the military and other fields. In and through them we could achieve the sort of effective pooling of sovereignty that we already have and are extending in N.A.T.O.

If everyone would sincerely try this method, we would make much more rapid progress towards European union than by the federal road. As we are discovering every day, any attempt at federation by its very nature brings out and exacerbates difficulties and differences. This alternative approach to European union is not a second best to federation. It is the one possible one, and it is the best one.

By this means we would not only ease the very great problems that exist in Europe itself once you try to achieve practical union, we would also marry the European and Atlantic communities instead of divorcing them. America and Canada could in varying degrees become party to various inter-governmental organizations as they already participate in O.E.E.C. We would also be able to add the strength of the Commonwealth to Europe without raising the problems of sovereignty that are quite insoluble. Such an approach to the problem of European union would, above all, take into realistic account the impact of American power on Europe, which has made European union both more desirable and more possible; but which has at the same time made Europe an inseparable part of the greater Atlantic community.

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Southern Farm

HOWARD SNYDER

I migrated from the North forty years ago and settled on a cotton plantation in the heart of the great American Cotton Belt. Our plantation was operated almost exactly as cotton plantations were operated in ante-bellum days. From fifteen to twenty Negro families supplied all labor. Cotton, and cotton only, was the money crop. Farming was a primitive affair. The same identical pieces of land, year after year, were put in cotton.

There were no big gang plows either horse or tractor drawn, cutting furrows ten to fourteen inches wide, such as were then used in Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa. Instead, a tiny breaking plow cut a furrow six inches wide; it was pulled by a single toy-sized mule and was the only implement used for plowing. This miniature plow called for as much man power as a big gang type that would plow up to twenty times as much in a day.

Harrowing the plowed land repeated the same wasteful story. A little child-sized harrow would be drawn by the toy-sized mule. No one in our community had even heard of a big section harrow drawn by four big mules, by horses, or by a tractor. The same tiny mule pulled a watch-charm-sized planter up and down the field to plant one long row at a time.

After the cotton came up, the women and children appeared on the scene, and with their garden hoes thinned out the cotton plants as necessary and then chopped out Bermuda grass and weeds. The men returned with their souvenir-sized plows, plowed dirt against the cotton stalks, the women and children hoed some more and the men plowed the dirt away from the cotton stalks. So the show went on until the cotton stalks were so high that the singletree on the plow would damage the plants.

A man and his wife could cultivate about ten acres of cotton in this way; a man, his wife, and two or three field-sized children fifteen acres; a man, his wife, and six or more children twenty to twenty-five acres.

USUALLY the tenant cultivated a few acres of corn for his own use, for meal for his bread, a little patch of sugar cane for his "lassus," a miniature patch of sweet potatoes, and a very small patch of guber peas (peanuts) for his children. If the tenant was lucky and produced a trifle more corn, potatoes, or peanuts than

Howard Snyder, Sr. and his son operate a livestock farm in Canton, Mississippi.

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he needed, he had a hard time selling the surplus. There was no market here for anything grown on the land save cotton. If he ran completely out of cash during the winter and his landlord did not see fit to make a loan, he could chop and split a wagonbed full of red oak stove wood and haul it to town. If he was lucky enough to find a buyer, he got one lone silver dollar for it. Is it any wonder that many of the tenants turned to corn liquor?

That's about the whole picture. None of the Negroes on our old plantation ever put up any hay. If he was a renter and had a mule or two and a couple of cows, his livestock could go to the swamp in winter and eat switch cane and honeysuckle vines.

I have omitted the hogs. Hogs! I was amazed when I first settled on the old plantation by the wretched, skeletonized hogs with their long snouts and sharp backs, known as razorbacks, chained to persimmon saplings and crepe myrtle bushes in dooryards. That was in summer. In winter the hogs were turned loose without rings in their noses to root up everything, to get fat on acorns and roots in the swamp, and finally make themselves ready, in a sorry fashion, for slaughtering. There were few hogs sold, no sheep to speak of and very few fat cattle. Cotton was the only money crop.

We ourselves kept a herd of beef cattle, but none of the fifteen or twenty families on the plantation pretended to keep cattle. A few of the families might have three or four head. I remember that we used to ship our cattle all the way to East St. Louis to market. There we took a big discount, for forty years ago in my neck of the woods the Southern cattle were not much for quality. They were long-legged, thin-backed, had big heads and little rumps, were undersized because of a deficiency in minerals in the pastures, were underbred because of years of inbreeding, and some of them woefully stunted because of tick fever.

But to come back to the cotton. After it was picked some time in November, the tenant was free to sit by his fireplace, dip snuff, make and drink moonshine, hunt possums and rabbits, and otherwise "frolic" until March 1st when his whole farming schedule started all over again, and in the identical way it had started every March 1st for generations.

TODAY everything is vastly different. In the first place, our old plantation, like hundreds of thousands of other old-time plantations, has been cut up into smaller tracts. Part of it is owned by a hustling young Negro farmer and other parts by a city farmer, who has come with heavy machinery—a bulldozer, tractors, and all the necessary machinery drawn by tractors—to make over the place, filling up gullies, cleaning out sassafras thickets and ancient fence rows, digging deep ponds to supply water for cattle. Still other parts have been sold to a once dyed-in-the-wool Southern cotton farmer who wants to forget cotton and grow hay, legumes, and various pasture-seed crops.

In the second place we have markets right here at home for almost anything produced on a farm. Within the past four or five years our little county seat town has floated bonds for a modern milk-processing plant, which now does a flourishing business. There are many modern dairies in my county. Forty years ago there were none at all. Last year we built a modern elevator and can now pay market prices for (and give safe storage to) corn, soy beans, oats, and grass and clover seed.

Our cattle markets are the best in the country. Within a radius of thirty or forty miles of my home we have a mammoth livestock sale six days a week all year round. Forty to fifty thousand dollars worth of livestock changes hands at each sale. There are good packing houses within thirty miles of my farm. Our whole South is rapidly becoming a big cow pasture. In parts of Florida you can see as many tall hats, cowboys, chaps, lariats, and cow ponies as in Montana or Wyoming. Today, Alabama leads all states in the Union in rate of cattle expansion. The big-headed, little-hipped runty cow of forty years ago has passed into history. All over the South you see herds in the tens of thousands that compare favorably with cattle bred in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Montana or Wyoming, and all the leading breeds are represented.

WHEN we moved to the South there were eighteen or twenty things called cabins on the old plantation. In poetry and in paintings they are supposed to be picturesque. In fact, every last one of them was an unsanitary hovel; most of them were filthy. Not one had screens for doors or windows. Most of them did not have any windows at all. Instead there was a door, two feet square, that opened outward.

Many of these filthy hovels have rotted since I have lived here. Sanitary four- or five-room houses painted white are replacing them. No self-respecting person, black or white, should have to live in a hovel that would not keep out snakes and rats. The South is slowly awakening to this fact.

The working capital of farmers in the area has increased tremendously, and annual income is sharply up. Within the past ten years electrified farms in the South have increased from 420,700 to 2,240,976. The South leads the nation in extending rural telephone service. The report of the REA (Rural Electrification Administration), published last fall, shows that three million farms in the nation are now wired for electrical service. More than half this total are in the Southern states.

Such illustrations could be multiplied. But the story they tell is simple enough. A revolution has taken place on the farms of the South. Today the Southern farmers look not to the past, but to a future bright with promise.

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Education By Reflex Action

I AM never so conscious of infamy as when I teach students who have been seduced into political dogma. In all aspects of life the seducer has the same purpose and object. He is exploiting and manipulating and taking advantage. No one so much as the seducer admits the existence of the will. He admits to it since his object is to destroy it. One of the ways he destroys it is by capturing the heart and mind with falsehood. The undogmatic know that the serpent lies coiled in any sun outside of Eden's gate. The omnipresence of the serpent is a fact which life discloses slowly. It is not part of the knowledge of the young. For to be young is to carry Eden in your heart.

Skepticism is, in Santayana's phrase, the chastity of the mind; but the young cannot live with it. They require perfection and certainty, and if the world is not perfectly good they can be made to accept it as perfectly bad. Or, rather, they can be made to accept it as perfectly bad so long as a protagonist is near who will restore its perfect goodness. It takes maturity to accept the constant absence of equilibrium, the fact that life never comes to terms with you, that conflict is always in the body, in the soul and in the world, that life is full of tragedy, that no problem is ever solved but shapes itself differently and inheres in time until time's end.

In politics this fact is denied in two ways and by two sets of men—the conservatives and the Communists. Such conservatives as Taft or the incredible Dewey Short (who cried in Congress at the end of the MacArthur speech, "the Voice of God spoke here today") remind one of Canute as they raise palsied hands to the waves of Time, saying, Thus far shalt thou go and no further. They do not think problems can be solved; they think they can be ended. They remind one of Sidney Smith's judgment on the participants at the Congress of Vienna. They were so conservative, he said, that had they been around at the time of Creation they would have voted for chaos.

The Communists represent the infamy I spoke of at the outset. For it is they who hold out the promise of solution, whispering and shouting and crying about an Eden here on earth, offering tranquility, a calm of mind, all passion spent. They represent the most logically outrageous appeal to the human spirit made since men first appealed to religion as a sanction for murder. And they ask men to be prepared to murder or to sanction the murder of others simply because they belong to a thing called a class, as if belonging to a class were a determining thing which, unlike Burke's nation, can be indicted.

THESE things occur to me because I have just finished teaching Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* and Lenin's *State and Revolution* to a group of young students. The word "infamy" occurred to me because these young people, having read neither of these pieces of writing before, nonetheless came to me prepared. Obviously someone had prepared them. And it is with the manner of preparation that I am quarreling here. In so doing I want it clearly understood that I have no quarrel with the public school system itself, of which I am a part, and which is now under foolish, splenetic attack. I am joining with no Buckleys at Yale, with no American Legion, with no war veterans of whatever religious classification.

What the prior preparation to which I refer consisted of is the creation of an attitude, indeed, a whole set, a pattern of attitudes, so that all political ideas and all historical references are received through a given kind of glass and refracted in a special and similar way. And when this happens only a short time is required before one can predict responses which come as automatically as those of an altar boy repeating Latin which he does not understand.

Perhaps this will become clearer if I admit that I am one who believes that reliance on the concept "class" defeats social analysis. And this is perhaps what I am fundamentally quarreling with. Moreover there is something shameful as well as wrong when the young have rigid ideas which turn about and are expressed in terms like "business" and "Wall Street" and "American imperialism" and "colonialism" and, of course, "feudalism." In a way I am shocked by these terms because they are without meaning.

I do not see the point of fighting for the building of a Jerusalem in the nineteen-fifties with slogans which have long since become stale and empty. I should have thought that those who teach the social sciences had long ago abandoned the term "munitions makers," the devil theory of war, the false idea that wars are fought wholly for profits. I should have thought that the origins of wars were too complex to be subsumed under such perilous categories—and that one who did not see war, at least in some sense, as an extension of politics had lost his way and had no right to be interpreting history for the young.

And I am just as shocked when I discover that what fraudulent or ignorant teachers turn out in such a group as the class I taught is not Marxist at all. I should have thought that a certain honesty would have

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exposed the students to the texts. But it is here, perhaps, that the difficulty occurs. Marx is not easy to read. Even granting, as I freely do, the repetitive infectiousness of the *Manifesto,* that piece of writing of a very young man is not logically the most compelling piece of prose available. Nor does the reading of Marx lead to Stalinism—a fact proved by the enfeebled existence of the Trotskyites, the only group I know who still read Marx or who understand him. For it is notorious that Stalinists do not read Marx and, therefore, do not understand him and even lie about him, as they do about everything else. The Stalinists I have known have had no more understanding of Karl Marx than average Catholics have of the Pelagian controversy.

My mind keeps returning to the fraud. What happened, and how did it happen, that certain otherwise bright young minds could say, leading from a discussion of Lenin, that Communists are "morally courageous men"? Why was there an immediate and active, wholly prior pejorative judgment on Arthur M. Schlesinger's *The Vital Center* when it was paralleled with reading of Lenin? Why was Mr. Schlesinger's parody of the Grand Inquisitor scene from Dostoievski rejected as false? Why, given the available evidence, was the Wallace campaign taken as an orthodox American exercise? Why did it have to be fought all over again?

If any or all of these positions were independently held, intellectually argued, the mind uncoerced by all save evidence, one would have no ground for objection. History, for the particular students I am talking about, has become a matter settled by authority, not by evidence. George Orwell is not to be taken seriously as an artist, but Howard Fast is. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., is not an historian but a propagandist, while Herbert Abtheker is as objective as the sun. The Stockholm petitions are an honest bid for peace, but the Marshall Plan is a device to promote U. S. imperialism.

IT is true, of course, that the William Buckley interpretation of American teaching and of American politics is hardly the material with which to redress the balance of universe such as I am dealing with here.

But the Conservative must, at this time, strengthen his own position. Our politics are presently so constituted that liberals, like the poor of God, outnumber all others. The young like to regard themselves as liberal, as democratic and progressive. They regard themselves as especially biased toward justice. They are properly impatient with the ills of the world. I think that we owe them as many examples as can be found of what Lionel Trilling has called the undeceived intelligence. Few men in public political life are engaged with the politics of truth. Men quarrel with our immediate past as if it were wholly indefensible; other men defend our immediate past as if it were immaculate. Men credit President Roosevelt with the creation of an earthly paradise; other men consign him to the deepest hell. All this is understandable, even though it is not to be preferred.

But where if not in our school systems does the undeceived intelligence get trained and guarded and prepared? To what standard can men repair if honesty is absent? When he wrote the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson was resting his immediate and his ultimate case on "the decent opinion of mankind." Democracy presupposes the continued existence of a decent mankind. Error is sharply different from intellectual conspiracy, and error can be permitted, as Jefferson pointed out, to contest with truth just as long as reason is present in the combat.

The right of the teacher to express himself in a classroom, wholly free from all coercion, is only slowly won. Like virtue, the right is not easily sustained. Like virtue, it is regarded with envy and fear. It is pursued and harassed by every panderer to passion, whim, convention, caprice and private or public propaganda. All organized groups across the whole vast arc of vested interest wish, and daily try, to control the teacher, the textbook, the classroom and the child.

But academic freedom was designed to protect the right of the honest mind to say what it holds to be true, and the right of the human conscience to give voice to the things by which it truly lives. It does not give teachers the right to lie, to withhold the truth, in whole or in part. It was never designed to protect the fraudulent—whether the politics of the fraud come from allegiance to the left or to the right.

I do not believe that it is the purpose of education to produce good citizens. I do believe it ought to try to produce good men. But even if we were to grant the former notion, it must be said that the moral character of our community can never be enriched by men who are themselves immoral.

FRANCIS DOWNING.

THE STAGE

OF THEE I SING

THE only thing missing from this plush, polished, and well-paced revival of America's most famous musical satire is the target. The same old arrows fly into the air, but they have no place to land. The once hilarious concept of our Vice-President as the true 'forgotten man' has lost its impertinence for obvious reasons; the passion of the American male for Atlantic City bathing beauties seems to belong to vintage newsreels celebrating the arrival of the Graf Zeppelin; even the automatic humors of a Southern

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accent have paled through repetition. What amounted to shrewd observation and sharp writing in 1931 turns into dry and even perplexing whimsy now, and all the energy in the world cannot quite bring the Kaufman-Ryskind-Gershwin lampoon back to vivid stage life.

There are at least three moments of high good humor in the show at the Ziegfield, but two of them are dance routines which have nothing to do with the case—in one of them Paul Hartman tangles with the chorus girls, in the other he guides Jack Carson through a bit of soft-shoe vaudeville—and their very success indicates which way the wind has blown. Only the irrelevant has refused to date. The third happy episode is one in which election returns are flashed onto a screen, and this is a timeless masterpiece composed almost entirely of visual *non sequiturs*. It comes very close to being worth the price of admission in itself; but since it occurs midway through the first act there is an awful lot of evening left in which to dissipate its hysterical effect.

Jack Carson makes an agreeable Wintergreen, though he winds down pretty obviously as the entertainment lengthens and the satire thins out. And Paul Hartman is most comfortable when he can forget about Throttle-bottom and concentrate on the maniacal dance mishaps which are his chief stock in trade. Betty Oakes, Lenore Lonergan, Loring Smith, and Howard Freeman are all as competent as they can be, George Gershwin's score is still exhilarating to listen to, and Albert Johnson's sets are fine. But the bite of the book is gone, and "Of Thee I Sing" was one musical comedy in which the book really counted. *(At the Ziegfeld)*

SHUFFLE ALONG

THIS one wasn't so much a revival of the original hit musical of 1921 as a contemporary potpouri trading on a successful title. It did borrow two Noble Sissle-Eubie Blake melodies from the earlier revue—"I'm Just Wild About Harry" and "Love Will Find a Way"—but all the rest of it was lamentable nonsense having to do with an American army unit stationed in Italy, a confusing over-abundance of uniformed love affairs, and an inexplicable and interminable second-act fashion show. If the foregoing description sounds incoherent, I can only assure you that it is a model of clarity alongside the shenanigans authors Flournoy Miller and Paul Gerard Smith offered by way of a book; and the musical interpolations of Joseph Meyer and Floyd Huddleston improved matters very little.

It was all too bad inasmuch as there were four or five people around—Avon Long, Hamtree Harrington, Delores Martin, Thelma Carpenter, Napoleon Reed—who might have done wonders with even moderately respectable material. (*Closed at the Broadway, reportedly for a two-week rewrite job*).

WALTER KERR.

THE SCREEN

OUT OF CRANNIES

PERHAPS my expectations, like Tennyson's when he found the flower in the crannied wall, were too great. I approached the new English film, "Outcast of the Islands," with high hopes: a Conrad story with a superb cast directed by Carol Reed should be big stuff. But as reel after reel went by, steeped in the lush atmosphere of the Far East, and as I watched the blackguard Willems turn blacker and blacker amongst people not much better than he, I began to wonder what all this was leading up to. After all, you can take only so much of cynicism and melodrama (even when it stems from a master of English prose) before you need a breath of fresh air. The breathing spaces in "Outcast of the Islands" are few.

The plot revolves mainly around Willems and is meant, no doubt, to show the disintegration of a white man in a far-off, unfamiliar and unhealthy locale. But even at the film's start in Macassar, Trevor Howard portrays Willems as a despicable cheat disliked by his boss, his wife and others. To attract the attention of Captain Lingard (Ralph Richardson), the man who has come to his aid many times, Willems pretends to commit suicide. Again Lingard rescues him and takes him to a trading post on islands that can be reached by a secret route known only to Lingard, who foolishly exposes the charts to Willems.

Almayer, the manager of Lingard's trading post on these islands, who is married to Lingard's adopted daughter, resents the intrusion of the new Lingard protégé. After Lingard's departure, Almayer (played by Robert Morley with much petulant puffing and pouting) treats Willems with disdain and well-founded suspicion. However Almayer (whose only virtue seems to be his love for his daughter, and even this is tinted with self-love) mistreats practically everyone, including his washed-out, browbeaten wife (Wendy Hiller).

Perhaps it is Almayer's as much as Willems' own weakness that drives Willems to consort with the natives. He falls hopelessly in love with the chieftain's daughter (played by Kerima, an extraordinarily beautiful French-Arab newcomer) and in order to get her discloses to the natives Lingard's secret route to the islands. At the film's end, Willems, cast out even by the natives, hides with the girl up the river where the betrayed Lingard finds him, denounces him, and leaves him in desolate exile. (In Conrad's novel the girl finally shoots Willems.)

I can't remember when I've seen such a thoroughly cynical movie with so many hateful characters. Mrs. Almayer's attempts at kindness lead only to rebuffs. And Lingard's efforts to save Willems seem to lead

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only to bitter disillusionment. "There's no anger or contempt in me now. You are my shame," Lingard says to Willems, who pleads to return to civilization.

This finale, with Willems and the girl left alone and already hating each other, is as depressing as what went before it. And you might well wonder why Carol Reed chose to film this novel with its involved plot and still more complicated characterizations. Actually Reed's production is excellent. Most of it was filmed in Ceylon and the sights and sounds of island life are brought to the screen in rich detail. Although Reed has directed his cast well, they hardly ever move your emotions or make you care much one way or the other.

Even Carol Reed's suspense films ("Odd Man Out," "The Fallen Idol," "The Third Man") are more than just thrillers, and he has shown that he can handle other material too—such as "The Stars Look Down" and several excellent war movies. No one would expect him to stick to the suspense motif. But in "Outcast of the Islands" Reed tackled more than he, or perhaps any other director, could fashion into a convincing movie.

ON the opposite side of the ledger, there's another new film based on a novel which may not have any of the literary qualifications of Conrad's opus but certainly makes an excellent movie. "Scaramouche" actually bubbles with vigor and vitality. Except for a couple of times when its script gets somewhat loquacious, you don't have to take this film one bit more seriously than did Producer Cary Wilson, whose interests were in adventure, romance and color and not in historical accuracy. Rafael Sabatini's story, as you may remember if you read the popular novel or saw the previous movie version starring Ramon Novarro, takes place in that pre-French-Revolutionary period when the first rumblings of liberty, equality and fraternity were heard but the aristocrats still had the upper hand and tried to keep it through use of the sword.

The political implications are there only for background and are not meant to distract from the fancy costumes that glitter in Technicolor splendor or from the characters whose personal stories are here more important than what happened to a king or queen. We see Marie Antoinette (Nina Foch) only at the film's beginning when she starts the plot a'rolling—a plot that is at times as involved as Conrad's but is so fanciful and built on such superficial characterization that it requires no concentration. What counts is the action, and Director George Sidney keeps that moving through most of the scenes at a fast pace.

His cast, led by Stewart Granger as the handsome hero bent on avenging the death of his good friend, is well suited to the imaginative flights of the script. Mel Ferrer is a wicked marquis, the best swordsman in all France, the man whom the Queen commands to marry one of her court ladies. Janet Leigh, looking lovelier than ever in stylized eighteenth-century costumes, plays this girl, who is expected to marry Mel but whose real love is for Granger. Most striking of all the attractive women gathered for this elaborate movie is Eleanor Parker. Portraying an actress, she also is smitten with Granger when he joins a group of strolling players and assumes the disguise of Scaramouche to escape the soldiers hunting him down because of his liberal tendencies.

If you accept the story of "Scaramouche" in the same tongue-in-cheek manner with which it's done, you'll enjoy the picture. It has been handsomely designed, with some good slapstick in the strolling player scenes, several colorful court episodes and plenty of swashbuckling. Its numerous duels are among the cinema's best. Actually the whole picture seems to be a build-up for a big duel between Ferrer and Granger. Their swordplay is thrilling and makes previous outstanding scenes ("Hamlet" and "Cyrano") seem amateur. If by chance you find you have taken "Scaramouche" too seriously, its makers put you in your place at the end with a burlesque joke involving Miss Parker—and Napoleon, of all people!

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

"THE LOST LIBERALS"

Fremont, Ohio

TO the Editors: Your issue of March 28 contained two important articles, Peter Viereck's "Symbols: Hiss and Pound" and Doris Grumbach's "The Lost Liberals". I agree wholeheartedly with the general message of each—that liberals must continue to be liberals—yet I feel that both Mr. Viereck and Mrs. Grumbach suffer from a serious misconception. This is that all, or even the majority, of American liberals looked upon Hiss and Pound as symbols of liberalism. They may have been in certain areas of Manhattan island, but they were not, I assure you, in other parts of America, especially not in the great homeland of indigenous American progressiveness and liberalism, i.e., the America that stretches west of the Hudson River. For anyone to perpetuate the myth (which is what it is, in my opinion) that American liberals must atone for the guilt charges against Hiss and Pound is, I think, to do a disservice to the cause of liberalism and to play the game of its enemies.

I consider myself a liberal, in the tradition of John P. Altgeld, whose biography I had the privilege of writing, and of other Americans like him. I did not and never could have considered Hiss or Pound, and

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men like them, as symbols of American liberals. The fact is I never heard anything about Alger Hiss until the newspapers said he was to run the Dumbarton Oaks conference. As for Ezra Pound—well, my favorite poet is Carl Sandburg. Why, then, I should suffer over Alger Hiss and Ezra Pound I cannot imagine, though I am aware that many agencies and many people, like Senator McCarthy and Mr. Budenz, are trying to make me suffer because of them. However, to let them get away with this is to cooperate in their anti-liberalism and their anti-intellectualism.

I repeat that I never heard of Alger Hiss until the Dumbarton Oaks affair, and at no time had I ever heard of him as a liberal or even as a New Dealer. I did hear of Franklin Roosevelt, Harold Ickes, Harry Hopkins, Justice William O. Douglas and other real liberals—the real symbols of the American liberal movement of the 1930's. I did hear of John P. Altgeld, William Jennings Bryan, Tom Johnson, Hazen Pingree, Brand Whitlock, Ed Costigan, Robert M. LaFollette, senior and junior, James Couzens, F. H. LaGuardia, Jane Addams, Wayne Morse, Robert M. Hutchins, William E. Sweet of Colorado, Maury Maverick, Justice Hugo Black, William Benton, Joseph O'Mahoney, Marshall Field, Herbert Lehman, Justice Robert H. Jackson. The list can be expanded. These men and men and women like them, including Edward Bellamy, Henry George, "Bloody Bridles" Waite, Governor Pennoyer, Governor Hogg, Father McGlynn, George W. Norris, Bishop Sheil, Archbishop Spaulding, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise; yes, and Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Jackson (to cover a wider expanse of American history) have been and are the true symbols of American liberalism. They and their ideas really have nothing to do with Hiss or Pound, nor even with Max Eastman, Granville Hicks, Kafka—or Karl Marx.

IN America, we have our own movement of social progress, our own ideology, if it is permissible to use the term, of social justice. It began long before Marx was born. It is indigenous to the American soil. When American liberals remember this, then and only then will they again play a part in American politics.

Peter Viereck is wrong when he says liberals must face "the guilt of Hiss and Pound". Why should I, as a liberal, face their guilt any more than I should face the guilt of Wilkes Booth or Al Capone? Doris Grumbach is wrong in saying that the college liberals of the thirties have "queasy consciences." Anybody who followed Pound into fascism or somebody else into Communism should have a "queasy conscience". But those of us who were and are in the tradition of Jefferson and Altgeld and Bryan and Bishop Sheil do not have to beat our breasts. We have no fear of nor need for subpoenas. We need but stand, like Justice Douglas, by our faith in the American Bill of Rights and in the strength of American political and social concepts.

Let us cease talking and writing of "the lost liberals." Let us cease pretending that we are "confused liberals." That is merely escapism. Let us stand where all of us should have stood, and where most actually have, on the path of American liberalism, along which so many glorious battles have been fought—and won, and will be again. The answer to Budenz and Chambers is Altgeld and Bryan. The answer to McCarthy of Wisconsin is LaFollete of Wisconsin. The answer to Elizabeth Bentley is Jane Addams.

HARRY BARNARD.

Chicago, Illinois

TO the Editors: Judging from the remarks of Mr. David Cort in the April 25 issue, the liberal has been getting cavalier treatment in the pages of The Commonweal. Praiseworthy is his zeal to defend this "proud word," yet I fear that Mr. Cort has done further violence to the idea of the liberal and has succeeded only in adding to the confusion.

Admittedly, he has set himself a difficult task in trying to define a word that has been misappropriated by fools and knaves as a convenient container for some rather shabby ideas. But difficulty should not excuse error, particularly now when irresponsible use of the invidious slur sometimes spells catastrophe for honorable men in public service. The term "liberal" has not yet lost its respectability, but it soon will unless we learn to distinguish the liberal from the sheep and wolves around him.

It is impossible to serve the interests of liberalism by believing that which is false to be true. Of all people, the liberal can least afford to deceive himself; he must understand reality on the common-sense plane to the fullest extent of his capabilities. For it is the aim of liberalism to give each individual the largest degree of liberty which can be enjoyed without damage to the claims to liberty justly presented by other individuals.

Unless the liberal seeks to readjust the scales balancing the delicate relations between the individual and the state whenever the equilibrium is disturbed, he does both himself and his community a disservice.

With this well established credo of the liberal in mind, I was mildly shocked to come across Mr. Cort's assertion that "Liberalism does not go with marriage; or it becomes libertinism." This may be belaboring the obvious, but I would like to recall for Mr. Cort a marriage that was contracted some years ago—the marriage of liberalism to limited government. History recollected has blurred the details, but this was a true marriage; it is the casualness of Mr. Cort's annulment that was shocking.

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The test for David Cort's liberal is non-involvement. In his view the true liberal subscribes to no organization, no orthodoxy, no authority; he represents the independent vote that regularly decides American elections; he neither pickets nor agitates; he is a partisan of no cause. Aloof, disdainful of the mire of political conflict, in pristine innocence he consults the dictionary to discover his identity.

Mr. Cort libels the American liberal by perpetrating this myth. This pallid, political cipher is not a liberal; he is kinsman to Whittaker Chambers' "spiritual vagrants . . . seeking an intellectual night's lodging."

I prefer history to the dictionary for the validation of the liberal's credentials. Even a hurried look at the record reveals a chronicle of passionate involvement in the defense of liberty, a story of commitment without reservation.

POLITICS is antipathetic to altruism, and liberalism makes no pretense of selflessness. It is a sophisticated doctrine founded on the belief that the human personality cannot develop its full potentialities without a circumscribed area of individual freedom beyond state control. Mr. Cort may ascribe any motives he pleases to the barons at Runnymede, the Whig families in 18th century England, the states' rights men in the American Constitutional Convention; the inescapable fact remains this it is because of their stand that government be limited, we enjoy guarantees of personal freedom today.

Because the liberal is concerned with truth he cannot afford to delude himself about the nature of political participation. The struggle for the state is continuous and perilous; abdication by the liberal in the face of threat to any individual's personal freedom is concurrence in the destruction of his own image. The liberal is a political realist and turns away from the luxury of political dilettantism which, of all the forms of social snobbery, is most pernicious in a democratic regime.

"Independence" as a political attitude is a form of political hari-kari under representative government with a two-party system. The liberal mitigates the "tyranny" of the majority by minority dissent registered through voluntary association with others, and utilizes the forms of political democracy, imperfect though they be, to re-make the state in his own image.

Without apology he must decline Mr. David Cort's gratuitous garland of irresponsibility. No, Mr. Cort, this marriage of liberalism to limited government is still valid. Nor is it likely that it will ever become adulterous so long as the liberal retains his enchantment with freedom and is able to protect the old lady from her seducers.

THOMAS E. KENNELLY.

"PSYCHOANALYSIS CONDEMNED"

Topeka, Kansas

TO the Editors: I base this opinion and comment upon the abstract of Monsignor Pericle Felici's article as cited in the New York *Herald Tribune* and in the *Eastern Kansas Register,* a diocesan weekly. The article is quoted as describing what are called "the manifest errors" of psychoanalysis. If these errors are manifest, it is not clear why one should feel obliged to call attention to them except for the avowed purpose of "obstructing the spread of psychoanalytic doctrines and techniques." These doctrines and techniques have been in existence for over fifty years, and if the Church had felt them to be evil, it could long since have put the writings of Freud on the Index. Significantly enough, this has not been done.

The warning that the use of psychoanalytic technique demands extreme caution is certainly not to be contested; every good psychoanalyst would fully concur. Incautious treatment of any kind is undesirable. That it must be practiced only by skilled practitioners of unimpeachable moral character is likewise a basic pillar of psychoanalytic training. That Monsignor Pericle Felici has "reached the conclusion that it is difficult to excuse from mortal sin one who knows these moral dangers yet adopts this method of treatment" would seem to imply that if something requires caution and integrity it is sinful to use it. This is an astonishing conclusion indeed.

Monsignor Felici refers to suggestions made by the analyst to the patient. Actually, free association is the exact antithesis of suggestion, although suggestion itself can surely not be condemned categorically. The moral issue would certainly be not *whether* the doctor suggests, but *what* he suggests, and this goes back again to the moral character of the therapist. No good therapist is going to suggest something immoral. The "boasted therapeutic effectiveness" of psychoanalysis gets somewhat beyond moral values; boasting is a venial sin, I believe, in its own right, whether one is boasting about one's virtue or about one's scientific method.

Monsignor Felici would seem to be most concerned about the "alarming feature" of the theory of sublimation, "according to which religious sentiment, charity, Christian mortification, and all noble sentiments are reduced to a shameful instinct." It is true that Freud believed that in the course of human life and experience, primitive tendencies could be developed and purified and inspired, given the right type of life experiences and training. Freud believed that some people could assist in the better control of evil tendencies within another human being, and the better development of the good tendencies. He observed—as we all have —that in spite of such good training and such good

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ideals, some individuals falter, and he proposed that they might sometimes falter because of ignorance and confusion regarding their own intentions. He believed that meditation and self-examination under the guidance of someone who would listen patiently could be of help.

A good many Catholic priests have been saying (and practicing) this for a long time. In a good many instances priests fail in this because of psychological quirks in the suppliant which are beyond the professional competence of a priest, no less than the removal of a brain tumor would be beyond his competence. For the help of such individuals, sometimes brain surgery and sometimes psychoanalysis can accomplish what the priest cannot.

That being the case, such diatribes against psychoanalysis come with the same bad grace that diatribes against religion come from a few psychoanalysts. For, as a psychoanalyst, I could say without fear of contradiction (even from Monsignor Felici) that priests also should use caution in dealing with human beings and that the offices of the clergyman "should be practiced only by skilled individuals of unimpeachable moral character." This caution should apply to the delivery of broadcast condemnations which only distress the weak and pain the wise, and which supply ammunition to the enemies of Christianity.

KARL A. MENNINGER, M.D.

The French Literary Scene

WALLACE FOWLIE

IT HAS become a commonplace today to point out the fact that France has not recovered from her victory of 1918, when she lost in battle one and a half million men. The French writers who began publishing about 1950 claim that the hope of their generation has been betrayed. They look back to the decade 1920-30, during which they were born or were children, as the decade of illusion. They were years of extraordinary prestige for France, when such artists as Cocteau, Picasso and Stravinski worked together. When the young writers of today read about the already distant Dreyfus Case at the beginning of the century, they see it now as a small religious war, an omen of the tremendous conflicts existing in Europe from the Spanish Civil War of 1936 to the Resistance Movement, Korea and the war in Indochina.

Mr. Fowlie has written widely on contemporary French literature. He is the author of "Rimbaud," "Clowns and Angels," "Jacob's Night," etc.

Their central question, which they ask in many forms, is always about hope. Is all hope forbidden this new generation of writers because of their still fresh memory of the concentration world and the atomic bomb? Even if such words as "socialism" and "democracy" seem void of meaning for them, they still believe in Europe as a possible country, and on the whole refuse to choose between what they consider the two technological empires of Russia and the United States. History has moved rapidly during the last ten or fifteen years, and already the four great men of letters in modern France: Gide, Proust, Valéry and Claudel, are looked upon as classical writers, as writers no longer engaged in immediate problems.

Such heroes as Gide's Lafcadio and Colette's Chéri could hardly be created in 1952. The younger writers certainly believe that art transcends its period, but they are particularly curious about the way in which a period tracks down the artist and marks him. They are attentive to the manner by which a writer expresses his period, surpasses it and even helps to form it.

CONTEMPORARY French literature is dominated by critical writing. For some time the novel has not succeeded in renewing itself. Very little new poetry is being published. Even the theatre, which has had some excellent new productions, cannot compete with the high standard of critical writing. In works of a more purely creative nature, such as novels and plays, the critical element has been so prevalent that contemporary literature, taken as an ensemble, constitutes an accusation against ideas and social institutions, a tremendous enterprise of destruction.

The leading writers in the immediately preceding generations have been preparing the way for the present state of literature. The theme of revolt in Malraux, the humiliation of the hero in Kafka, the obsession with catastrophe in Faulkner, the disintegration of the worldly salons in Proust and Henry James, represent stages or aspects in the genesis of the literary hero, who today is just the opposite of a Promethean-like adventurer or conqueror.

The immediate acute problems are the preoccupations of the new writers, whether they be problems of the professional, political or sociological orders. "The century has us by the throats," writes Pierre de Boisdeffre, who remembers Frenchmen who had the leisure to love books, music, pictures, travel and when Barrès could meditate on Toledo and Gide on Biskra. The writers who have just come of age have the impression of belonging to an end-of-the-world period when a Marquis de Sade, if he lived today, would be writing his works at the Café des Deux Magots rather than in the Bastille.

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AT the beginning of 1952, the new book most widely read and most fervently discussed in France was the essay of Albert Camus, called *L'Homme Révolté*. It is the type of critical writing, belonging to the history of ideas and history of morals, which possesses, for the moment at least, far greater vitality than the contemporary novel. The elegance of Camus' style reflects the elevation of his thought. He has placed himself at the very heart of contemporary distress and has given in this last book, published in December 1951, a lucid diagnosis of our age.

Camus was born in Algiers, in 1913, of a family belonging to the working class. He studied at the University of Algiers where he fell ill with tuberculosis when he was preparing his agrégation examinations in philosophy. At the beginning of the war he was a journalist in Paris. He played an important role in the Resistance Movement, and after the Liberation became editor of the socialist newspaper *Combat,* where his editorials reached a large public. His two books of that period, a novel, *L'Etranger,* and an essay, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe,* gave him a place of such importance and influence that some believed he was succeeding to the position of Gide as the awakener of consciences.

At first Camus' name was closely associated with Sartre and existentialism, but more and more he is occupying a position of leader, which he has won without the support of a magazine, a literary school, a political party or a church, a very infrequent accomplishment in the history of French letters.

In his new book, *L'Homme Révolté,* Camus studies the difference between a revolt and a revolution. A revolt he sees as a testimony involving a single individual. A revolution marks a degeneration, because it belongs to the order of efficacy and ends by destroying the humanity in man. Camus feels it is of prime importance to preserve the conscience of revolt within the revolution and thereby realize the brotherhood of men. Camus has been called by some of his younger admirers their conscience, an irritable, uneasy conscience which is making a valiant effort to understand the age and to prepare a renascence from the ruins. His writings deal with the tragic aspects of our time, but they also call upon the will of man to dominate the absurd aspect of man's fate.

IN the last week of 1951, Jean Cocteau's new play, "Bacchus," was presented by Jean-Louis Barrault, at the Marigny. With its religious theme, involving a bishop and a cardinal in Germany at the time of Luther, it bore certain resemblances to Sartre's new play, "Le Diable et le bon Dieu," and to the new play of Thierry Maulnier, "Le Profanateur," whose première occurred soon after the première of "Bacchus." With these three plays, God became, as a chansonnier put it, the leading character in the Paris theatres. Whenever the religious problem is treated in France, it is fairly certain that a controversy will start. "Bacchus" provided the excuse. Within a week after the première, journalists were referring to *L'Affaire Bacchus.*

The play begins with a debate on the meaning of revolt and grows into a description of the rebel. A tradition in a small German town gives a man absolute power for one week each year. Hans, the village idiot, is elected to this role of Bacchus and he turns out to be a simulator, a hater of leaders and priests and the rich. He begins to prepare the ideal city as if he were a disciple of Rousseau. His adversary is a cardinal, a cynical, intelligent man sent from Rome to investigate heresy.

The debate between Bacchus and the Cardinal is really the eternal debate between the young and the old, between the idealist and the rationalist, in a sense between Rousseau and Voltaire. As is usually the case, the idealist begins the revolt and the rationalist ends the revolution. An analogy might be made between this book of Camus and the brilliant second act of "Bacchus," which enacts the struggle between the Cardinal with fifteen centuries of theology and politics behind him, and a very lonely, very vulnerable youth.

But the controversy over the play began with a letter of François Mauriac to Cocteau, published in *Le Figaro Littéraire* of Dec. 29, 1951. Mauriac had been present on the opening night and had left the theatre before the final curtain. His exit had been generally noticed and he explained at great length in his open letter his sadness over the play. He said first that he had been watching what he calls Cocteau's "number" for almost half a century, and that this new play illustrates the current phrase that God is dead. He upraided Cocteau, as one might a child, for his mockery of the Church in the character of the maudlin bishop, of the cynical cardinal and in the speeches of Bacchus-Hans.

On the last day of the year, in *France-Soir,* Cocteau answered Mauriac, in a letter every sentence of which began with the phrase: *Je t'accuse.* Cocteau claims that his play is in honor of the Church, that his cardinal wants to save the soul of a young heretic. Two sentences of the play, censured by Mauriac, were revealed by Cocteau to be historical. The one on the devil: "The devil is pure because he can do only evil," is taken from Jacques Maritain. The other, spoken by the Cardinal in the play, "A man who thinks is our enemy," is a sentence of Napoleon and means "a man who does not think as I do is my enemy." Cocteau especially objected to the tone of hatred he sensed in the letter and accused Mauriac of respecting only one French tradition, that which consists in killing the poets.

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Eight Catholic Writers and a Search for a Pattern

MARIA CROSS. By Donat O'Donnell. Oxford University Press. $5.

By JOHN W. SIMONS

DONAT O'Donnell's *Maria Cross* is a series of essays which purports to discover the "imaginative worlds" of eight Catholic writers—Mauriac, Bernanos, Greene, O'Faoláin, Waugh, Péguy, Claudel, and Bloy. He seeks the dominant imaginative pattern of each writer and establishes a provisional relationship between that pattern and Catholicism. In his final chapter he indicates a pattern which the writers hold in common and endeavors to connect this pattern with Catholicism.

The author warns us in advance that his book is not about Catholicism, not about the lives of the writers, not about their abstract ideas, and not about their techniques. If he is unable to live up to these ascetic exclusions, it is still true that he adheres manfully to his main objective. His critical methods vary, but the one to which he gives his primary allegiance is that of psychoanalysis. He quotes approvingly from Chesterton: "Criticism means saying about an author the very things that would have made him jump out of his boots." This reminds us of what Empson, an acknowledged preceptor of the author, said about *Alice in Wonderland*. "There are things in Alice that would give Freud the creeps."

Certain of Mr. O'Donnell's opinions may or may not give you the creeps. "In Mr. Waugh's theology, the love of money is not only not the root of all evil, it is a preliminary form of the love of God." Péguy's virtue of hope is (1) "no more than a fatuous belief that something will turn up" and (2) "a desire to return to the womb." Claudel's "existence seems to pass in the liquidity of the womb." Bloy "thought he himself might be God." His private myth can be regarded, according to Mr. O'Donnell, as "a statement in mystical terms of the Labor Theory of Value."

WHAT are the elements which the eight writers have in common? Mr. O'Donnell summarizes them in the word "exile." It is a threefold exile—from modernity, that is, from the prevalence of bourgeois values (Bloy, Péguy, Bernanos) or from the breakdown of bourgeois values (Mauriac, Waugh, Greene); from the rational element in society (and this involves a predisposition towards fascism); and from childhood (all eight authors long "for the conditions of the womb"). Their common relationship to one another and to Catholicism is symbolized in the character of Maria Cross, the equivocal heroine of Mauriac's *The Desert of Love*. Woman (Maria) is the sentient cross to which the eight sufferers are affixed. The ingenuity with which Mr. O'Donnell establishes their separate and common relationships to this woman-mother-pain-crucifixion symbol, together with the relationship of the symbol to Catholicism, is both admirable and ludicrous.

Faced with the problem of why Greene and Waugh chose to be Catholics rather than Protestants, the hard-pressed critic gives this lame and malevolent response: "Modern Protestantism, which is dead from the waist down, which conceals the cross, refuses devotion to the Mother of God, ignores the Communion of Saints, lays its emphasis on the reasonable rather than the mysterious, has obviously nothing to offer to imaginations like these." Barth, Brunner, and Niebuhr, please note.

Thus summarized, *Maria Cross* would seem to be a wayward and implausible book. Though it is often wayward, it is seldom implausible, and in many instances the analysis really illumines. In the main, the study of Mauriac yields valid and valuable judgments. The relentless pursuit of the symbolism of "gold" and "water" in the work of Claudel is strained but revelatory. The close reading he gives to Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* points to genuine structural weaknesses and to a certain culpable trickery of style.

But the author's project was self-defeating. He does not give even a provisional definition of Catholicism, so that the relationships which he establishes are always to elements within Catholicism—sometimes to elements which are only temporal, racial, or national; sometimes to elements which are purely accidental to Catholicism; and sometimes to elements which are no more characteristic of Catholicism than of other religions. The relationships thus established are tenuous or tangential, and occasionally the author betrays an uneasy awareness of this fact.

It was self-defeating, too, because the author committed himself to an impossible labor. The imaginative worlds of these eight authors are coextensive with their total artistic production. When you have analyzed *The Heart of the Matter* you have analyzed an important precinct of Greene's imagination but you have not analyzed his world. Moreover, when the author asserts that the task of criticism is the exploration of the subconscious he implies that the imaginative worlds of the eight writers (and indeed of all artists) will yield their full secret to the psychoanalytic method. Psychoanalysis is but one of many valid techniques. It is also one which places an unduly high premium on ingenuity and critical subjectivity.

It was self-defeating, finally, because of the obsessive antecedent concern to discover patterns. It should have been obvious from the outset that Waugh and Bloy have nothing in common except their essential Catholicism, but it is precisely this essential Catholicism which Mr. O'Donnell failed to define.

The author has some harsh words to say about Catholic critics and Catholic criticism. Much of it was deserved. But two exonerations are in order. When he quotes Madaule as saying that "one does not analyze Claudel," he implies that Madaule meant to shirk his critical responsi-

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bility. The more than thousand pages which Madaule has devoted to an analysis of Claudel's works are an obvious refutation. What Madaule means is that Claudel resists analysis, a fact which few will deny. When Maritain (whom O'Donnell clearly dislikes) counsels the novelist to learn at what "altitude" he is when he portrays evil, the author accuses him of "imposing the role of aerial photographer upon the novelist." This is a meaningless parody.

I am not sure that Catholic critics playing their game of "sublimated table tennis" are always much more ridiculous than Mr. O'Donnell disporting himself among the ambiguities. As things now stand, my preference goes to Mr. O'Donnell. He at least keeps close to the text and the writer's sensibility. His plunge into the subconscious inspires fewer irrelevancies (so far as literature is concerned) than most balloon excursions into the supernatural.

The Moment of Illumination

THE SOFT VOICE OF THE SERPENT and Other Stories. By Nadine Gordimer. Simon and Schuster. $3.50.

By RICHARD HAYES

NADINE Gordimer works a vein of quiet but intensely perceptive observation. Her stories, limned against a background of a well-known and loved South Africa, carry their own spatial and material authenticity. Miss Gordimer is, indeed, so much a mistress of this time and place, so verbally dexterous, so mercilessly accurate in her sensory responses, that one anticipates the performance of a potentially major writer.

What Miss Gordimer conveys with all this subtle and marvelous art is regrettably, however, of no comparable consequence. She is recording again all the terrors and delights of the exacerbated feminine sensibility, writing its tragic minor history on the heart laid bare. Her stories are characteristically constructed around a moment of illumination of "epiphany": a medical student's sudden awareness of the recesses of personality, a young woman's awakening to knowledge of the power to kill, a transient social contact between South African natives and a group of whites presenting an amateur performance of a Wilde play. What is unfortunate is the frailty of the original insight which so often prompts the display of craft.

Anonymity stalks the objective, created world of Miss Gordimer's imagination. Her people, though engaged in acts and perceptions which exhibit the human person in his full moral complexity, are nonetheless personally inconsequential; they function usually as vehicles for the author's lively and penetrating observation. Only twice does Miss Gordimer reveal what strength she may be keeping in reserve: in the story of "La Vie Bohème," a mordant portrait of two sisters divided by a shabby marriage, and in the notable "Watcher of the Dead," a solid, well-controlled study of grief in a Jewish family.

In a letter printed in the current issue of *Partisan Review,* Mr. Seymour Krim has made an admirable statement of our dissatisfaction with contemporary short fiction, pointing up its lack of pertinence and excitement and intimate meaning, its inability to "speak to us as a vital fiction should and once did." Nadine Gordimer is a prototype of the writers of whom he speaks, gifted and sensitive, but relying chiefly on the involved sensibility or the insights of an earlier generation.

Perhaps, with her youth, her craft and her fundamental moral seriousness, Miss Gordimer will be able to survive the debilitating defects of her contemporaries, and give us a fiction centered at the intersecting point of man's private and public life. That eventuality would certainly justify the publication of this volume of short stories—an act which now seems rather an act of literary piety, and an expression of faith in a young writer whose promise still exceeds her present achievement.

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Victims of Tyranny

THE INHUMAN LAND. By Joseph Czapski. Sheed & Ward. $3.50.

OUR LADY'S FOOL. By Maria Winowska. Newman Press. $3.00.

By EDWARD S. SKILLIN

THE Poles are a subject people whom too many of us have comfortably consigned to the terrain of lost causes. Outside of their own national groups they are all but forgotten in this country. Yet theirs is a spirit that will not die, as is evidenced by these two volumes.

The author of the first is a sensitive artist and poet. Mr. Czapski's account of his search for the missing Polish officers who were to be freed to set up a new army on Russian soil (to fight Hitler) is one of deepening disillusionment. It was the Katyn Forest all over again; they had been liquidated by the Russians almost to a man.

Yet in his Christian forbearance Joseph Czapski seldom yields to bitterness. Whether he is telling of gestures of sympathy for Polish prisoners on the part of Russian people or describing the Russian countryside, he does it with artistic objectivity. The climax of his sad narrative is of a positive sort: the joy that transported a prison camp for Poles when a pianist led them for hours in their native songs.

The second story—that of the Franciscan, Father Maximilian Kolbe—is even more extraordinary. His whole life was dedicated to serving Our Lady. Starting with nothing but an idea, he built up a publishing enterprise, a whole bustling community, in fact, which was turning out literally millions of copies of newspapers and magazines in the name of Mary Immaculate when the Germans came.

No less strikingly, everything was manned by Franciscan lay brothers, seven-hundred in all, who were the cream of thousands of candidates. These men lived in holy poverty, said their office and labored with all their might to make their giant presses sing God's praises. Hitler put an end to that.

If possible, Father Maximilian's martyrdom at the dread camp of Auschwitz was even more remarkable than his life as an apostle. Just as Edith Stein, he persuaded the authorities to sentence him to a lingering death by starvation in place of a cringing fellow-prisoner. Like her he inspired his pitiful cell-mates to sing and pray as long as they had breath.

Where Joseph Czapski is restrained in tone for the most part, Maria Winowska often verges on the ecstatic. And understandably so.

Ten Sixty-six

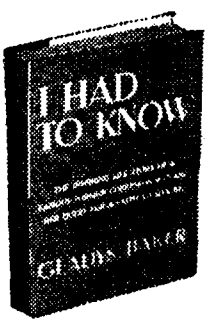
THE FOURTEENTH OF OCTOBER. By Bryher. Pantheon. $2.75

By PHILIP J. DRISCOLL

THE author of this novel, a woman of sensitivity and intelligence whose name derives from one of the Scilly Isles off Cornwall on the southwest coast of England, has set her sights high. She has taken as her subject the Norman conquest and the Saxon defeat at the Battle of Hastings on the Fourteenth of October, 1066; her theme is freedom —the price it costs, the demands it makes, the dangers to which it is exposed.

The story of the resistance against the Norman Duke William on the side of the Saxon Harald, the son of the dead king Edward, and the fear and despair which prevailed after the invader's triumph, is told in the first person by the Saxon boy, Wulf, who has sailed with a small group from his foster home in Cornwall to help in the fight. His life is further complicated by his unrequited love for Laurel, a girl from Cornwall who is married to his friend and companion in battle, Rafe, the Saxon who earlier rescued him from his forced enslavement in Normandy. After the battle is over and Wulf and his companions have safely returned to Cornwall, he finds that he cannot live in half-freedom, compromising as even Laurel has done by making half-friends with the invaders and their sympathizers, and he decides to leave the country and live perhaps a lifetime in exile but in freedom.

The essential tale is hardly more



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complicated than that. But Bryher is a serious and a careful novelist, and her book deserves more attention than the crude outline of a simple battle-and-defeat story would indicate. Her attention to detail, ability to recreate the terrain of Cornwall and the countryside around Hastings, her understanding of the actual campaign and knowledge of the age and history of the period—all are superbly realized. One stands in admiration of her achievement, and particularly of the verbal beauty with which she colors her descriptive writing. A single excerpt must suffice to illustrate this gift:

> . . . At each step the slope got softer and more slippery. All the fire colours, red, tawny, copper, had drifted from the forest to rot underfoot in leafy pools. I remembered, walking with my eyes on the ground, a wild, beautiful tangle that I had seen in Normandy, growing about the ruins of a cottage. The roof had fallen; the weight of creepers and of a spiral of white flowers, whose name I did not know, had forced the walls apart. Here and there a soft grey lichen-patterned stone that was almost silk pushed its way from the leaves. It had been late summer of my second year, and a group of us were gathering wood. . . .

Not all of Bryher's writing is as successful as her descriptive passages, however. The book suffers from some rather serious defects. The frame of reference is Wulf's mind and heart; events and characters are seen through his consciousness; he is the "I," the focal point of the novel. It is, therefore, all the more regrettable that he is not more completely and successfully realized, since so much depends upon him. His dedication to freedom is praiseworthy but his conflict over it is weak; we are never made to feel intensely his struggle and thus we are not moved when it is resolved.

The treatment of his love for Laurel is even less successful; it is more like puppy love than the fabled courtly love of ancient days. Laurel is flat—as, unfortunately, most of the characters in the novel are, perhaps because of the remoteness of the day in which they lived. As the object of passion or the cause for suffering she is highly unreal. Finally, the very nature of the story presents obstacles almost insurmountable to a dramatic realization. The outcome of the battle is known; the Norman invasion is pretty well taken for granted in our time; the Saxon freedom which was jeopardized has in some measure been secured. Conflict, failure, retreat and voluntary exile are great themes but demand heroic treatment. It is that grandeur which is missing here.

Lace Curtain

THE HOUSE OF SHANAHAN. By Roger B. Dooley. Doubleday. $3.

By SISTER MARIELLA GABLE

THE House of Shanahan is well named. Its hero is a clan of Irish

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Catholics who cling fanatically to the mores of the Church while apparently not having the faintest idea what it means to keep the first commandment. They suffer mainly from the conflict between the law of the Church against divorce and the desire of individual characters for marriage *ex lex*. For young Dennis and Genevieve marriage has failed. Though they are living apart, Dennis refuses to ask for a divorce. He falls in love with a fast young flapper and lives in sin with her. Genevieve, with eyes wide open to the risk she is running, goes out steadily with Philip, whom she loves deeply. She, however, at the moment of final agonizing choice gives up Philip to remain within the Church. All the clan are affronted by the beautiful Isabel, who marries a divorced judge. She floats in an aura of popularity and success.

With a complexity much more devious than the above partial account would seem to indicate, the story maintains unity by being channeled entirely through a single character, Rose Crowley, and by being allocated around a few key dates between 1925 and 1927. Thousands of precise details build up accurately the flavor of the Jazz Age. Firmly rooted in the city of Buffalo, the story includes everything from the bric-a-brac in the parlors of the shanty Irish to Father Baker's basilica and the Peace Bridge.

The *House of Shanahan* has everything except the breath of life. One of the nearly infallible tests of greatness is the way a work sticks in the memory. The Shanahan clan will be forgotten almost before it is known.

REVIEWERS

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THE ARTIST AT WORK, IV

"Compared with the immediate practical responsibility of the scientist, the responsibility of the artist must seem puny. The decision which faces him is not, I think, one of practical action. Of course, he will try to throw his weight into the scale, and that weight, if he is a writer or even a painter or genius, may have its effect.

"For the novelist—in our society the only artist who has a mass audience and at the same time effective economic control of the means of addressing it—the hope of some decisive influence is a reasonable one. For him, since he takes of all artists what is probably the largest portion of his culture as material, there is no more escape from the necessity for treating the content of his work seriously than there is for the social psychologist he is coming so closely to resemble.

"There is no Hippocratic oath in literature, and I am not attempting to draw one up. As far as I am concerned, the artist is a human being writ large, and his ethics are the ethics of any human being.

"Perhaps I can best illustrate what seems to me the new consciousness of those duties of assertion and refusal from one writer, and I do not think it is without significance that this writer projects the whole situation of choice into a scientific parable, the parable of a pestilence: a pestilence many human beings are called to fight against, called not by any supernatural obligation but by the simple fact that the fight against a plague is something like a biological human obligation."

—ALEX COMFORT
in The Commonweal
January 18, 1952

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